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EXAMINER

WONG, LESLIE

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**BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS  
AND INTERFERENCES**

Application Number: 10/014,180  
Filing Date: November 13, 2001  
Appellant(s): GUTTA ET AL.

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Dicran Halajian  
For Appellant

**EXAMINER'S ANSWER**

This is in response to the appeal brief filed 14 February 2005 appealing from the Office action mailed 13 September 2004.

**(1) Real Party in Interest**

A statement identifying by name the real party in interest is contained in the brief.  
2004.

**(2) Related Appeals and Interferences**

The examiner is not aware of any related appeals, interferences, or judicial proceedings which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

**(3) Status of Claims**

The statement of the status of claims contained in the brief is correct.

**(4) Status of Amendments After Final**

The appellant's statement of the status of amendments after final rejection contained in the brief is correct.

**(5) Summary of Claimed Subject Matter**

The summary of claimed subject matter contained in the brief is correct.

**(6) Grounds of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal**

The appellant's statement of the grounds of rejection to be reviewed on appeal is correct.

**(7) Claims Appendix**

The copy of the appealed claims contained in the Appendix to the brief is correct.

**(8) Evidence Relied Upon**

6,334,127

Bieganski et al.

12-2001

**(9) Grounds of Rejection**

The following ground(s) of rejection are applicable to the appealed claims:

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

2. Claims 1-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by **Bieganski et al.** (U.S. Patent 6,334,127 B1).

Regarding claims 1, 10, 19-23, **Bieganski** teaches a method, system, article of manufacture for assigning an item to one or more groups of items (col. 8, lines 24-53),

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each of said items characterized by at least one symbolic feature, said method comprising the steps of:

- a). computing a distance between corresponding symbolic feature values of said item and at least one item in each of said groups, said distance based on an overall similarity of classification (i.e., forming a neighborhood... who have the profiles most similar to the customer's profile) of all instances for each possible value of said symbolic feature values (i.e., distance = serendipity control value) (col. 7, lines 8-19, 46-48; col. 9, lines 22-33; col. 13, lines 6-17; lines 32-45);
- b). aggregating the distances between each of said features values to determine the closeness of said item and at least one item in each of said groups (col. 14, lines 32-56); and
- c). assigning said item to said group associated with a minimum distance value (col. 7, lines 9-39).

Regarding claims 2-6 and 11-15, **Bieganski** further teaches wherein said computing step employs a Value Difference Metric (VDM) technique to compute said distance between symbolic features (col. 6, lines 54-66).

Regarding claims 7-9 and 16-18, **Bieganski** further teaches wherein said items are programs (col. 16, line 29 – col. 18, line 52).

**(10) Response to Argument**

**Arguments(1):** Regarding claims 1, 10, and 19-23

Appellants argue that there is no teaching or suggestion in Bieganski that the serendipity control value is equal to the distance between corresponding symbolic feature values, as recited in independent claims 1, 10, and 19-23.

In response to the preceding arguments, Examiner respectfully submits that Bieganski teaches the claim limitation "... distance between corresponding symbolic feature values" as to form a neighborhood, the recommendation engine selects the set of users from the user population who have the profiles most similar to the customer's profile. The user item preferences of the customer are compared with the preferences of users stored on the database (col. 7, lines 8-19 and 46-48). For each item in the community popularity input 210, the serendipity control function applicator 204 computes a serendipity control value by applying a serendipity control function that was input in 212 to each occurring the community popularity data set 210. The serendipity control function 212 specifies how community popularity input values 210 are mapped to serendipity control values output from the applicator 204. A community popularity value exists for each item that occurs in the user preference data (col. 9, lines 22-33). Examiner interprets the term "distance" to be the closeness or similarities of the values between the two features. Bieganski's serendipity control value is a means to measure or rank the similarities (i.e., distance) between the items in the user preference data

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(col. 9, lines 28-32). Therefore, it is submitted that Bieganski's serendipity control value is equivalent to Appellants' distance.

***Appellants' disclosure 1:***

Appellants' invention relates to methods of recommending items (i.e., recommender system) of interests such as a television program to users. A user selects stereotypes of interest to initialize his or her profile with the items that are closest to his or her own interests (page 3, lines 18-20 and 30-32).

***Appellants' disclosure 2:***

The television programming recommender 100 processes the third party viewing history 130 to generate stereotype profiles that reflect the typical patterns of television programs watched by representative viewers. A stereotype profile is a cluster of television programs (data points) that are similar to one another in some way. Thus, a given cluster corresponds to a particular segment of television programs from the third party view history (page 7, lines 1-10).

***Appellants' disclosure 3:***

A given data point, such as a television program, is assigned to a cluster based on the **distance** (i.e., how close or similar) between the data point to each cluster using the mean of each cluster (page 4, lines 6-8).

In the program recommendation environment of the illustrative embodiment, the classes of interest are “watched” and “Non-watched”. Generally, the disclosed **distance** computation routine identifies values as being similar if they occur with the same relative frequency for all classifications. Thus, two values are similar if they give similar likelihoods for all possible classifications (page 4, lines 21-27).

Similar to **Appellant’s disclosure 1**, Bieganski teaches receiving applicable data includes user item preference data and community item popularity data (col. 3, lines 49-52).

Bieganski further teaches the serendipity function applied to the community item popularity value to produce the serendipity control value (col. 12, lines 11-16).

Bieganski further teaches producing a set of serendipity-weighted and filtered recommendations by first, a set of item recommendations is received from a recommendation engine 202 at step 1300. The first item in the set of item recommendations is selected, at step 1302, and a request is made for a serendipity control value for the first item, at step 1304 (col. 14, lines 33-38).

Similar to **Appellants’ disclosure 2**, Bieganski further teaches if the customer is looking for a specific book, then the customer may search by ISBN, title, author, or subject, and when the customer locates the book of interest, the customer may be presented with the serendipity-weighted and filtered recommendation value for the book



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as a prediction for how much she will like the book. The serendipity-weighted recommender system 808 provides serendipity-weighted and filtered recommendations using the past purchase history of the customer and of other costumer, found in the purchase database 808 (col.16, lines 40-49).

Similar to **Appellants' disclosure 3**, Bieganski further teaches another application of the invention is to predict serendipitous finds in items having audio/visual content. Such items include television programs, movies, radio programs, or a digital media program (col. 17, lines 20-23).

Bieganski further teaches creating a neighborhood (i.e., cluster) by comparing the preferences of all the database users against the preferences of the customer... then the n-maximum database users whose preferences are most similar to the preferences of the customer are selected for the neighborhood (Col. 7, lines 8-10, 40-53, and 57-65).

Based on the above, Bieganski discloses an electronic processing system for generating a serendipity-weighted recommendation output set according to a user based (preferences). Thus, Bieganski's system and Appellants' invention are in the same field of endeavor and the applied prior art teaches related subject matter (i.e., recommender system) in regard to Appellants' invention. Examiner submits that Bieganski teaches the limitations as claimed.

**Arguments (2):** Appellants continue to argue that assuming, arguendo, that distance is equal to serendipity control value, it is respectfully submitted that column 14, lines 32-56 of Bieganski teaches multiplying the recommendation value by the serendipity control value. Aggregating or adding distances is nowhere taught or suggested in Bieganski, let alone adding distances between each of the symbolic feature values to determine the closeness of two items, as recited in independent claims 1, 10, and 19-23. Bieganski merely discloses an electronic processing system for generating a serendipity-weighted recommendation output so that low value recommendations are not made. Bieganski does not teach or suggest that the serendipity control values are equivalent to distances between symbolic features, or aggregating the distances between each of the symbolic feature values to determine the closeness of two items, as recited in independent claims 1, 10, and 19-23. Rather, Bieganski teaches (column 14, lines 32-56) multiplying the recommendation value by the serendipity control value.

In response to the preceding arguments, Examiner respectfully submits that Bieganski teaches the claim limitation "Aggregating or adding distances" as once the serendipity control value has been received or calculated, the serendipity-weighted and filtered recommendation with the serendipity control value, at step 1306, in this case by multiplying the recommendation value by the serendipity control value, then it is added to the set of serendipity weighted and filtered recommendations, at step 1308 (col. 14, lines 43-49). Furthermore, it is common knowledge that multiplication is a quicker form

of addition: multiplication is still addition. Therefore multiplying has equivalent meaning as aggregating or adding.

Bieganski's system as illustrated in FIG. 2, the serendipity integration unit 206 takes the serendipity control value of an item produced by the control function applicator 204, and the recommendation value of that item produced by recommendation engine 202, and performs a computation to produce a final serendipity weighted recommendation (col. 12, line 66 – col. 13, line 4).

***Appellants' disclosure 4:***

Applicants' invention determines the similarity or closeness between two items by aggregating or adding the distances between each of the symbolic feature values (page 19, lines 20-22).

In Repsonse to Argument, Arguments (1), Examiner has pointed out how Bieganski's serendipity control value is equivalent to Appellants' distance.

Similar to **Appellants' disclosure 4**, Bieganski then multiplying the recommendation value by the serendipity control value and added (i.e., aggregated) to the set of serendipity weighted and filtered recommendations. As such, Bieganski's teaching of **adding** the result of the production of the recommendation value and the serendipity control value to produce a final serendipity weighted recommendation teaches the limitation "aggregating the distances..." as claimed.

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**(11) Related Proceeding(s) Appendix**

No decision rendered by a court or the Board is identified by the examiner in the Related Appeals and Interferences section of this examiner's answer.

***Conclusion***

Claims 1-23 are properly rejected under 35 USC § 102(e).

In light of the foregoing arguments, the Examiner respectfully requests the Honorable Board of Appeals to sustain the rejections.

Respectfully submitted,




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